


1. Executive Summary

Cypress Island (Figure 1) is a unique mosaic of state-owned uplands, tidelands, and bedlands, now protected by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources for the primary purpose of conservation. The Cypress Island Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA), Natural Area Preserve (NAP), and Aquatic Reserve are to be managed for the recovery and preservation of natural ecological systems. Low-impact public use and environmental education opportunities are provided within the NRCA and the Aquatic Reserve, but only where such uses do not adversely affect the resource values the area is intended to protect.

In accordance with the Natural Area Preserves Act of 1972, upland parcels on Cypress Island were acquired by the state and designated as the Cypress Highlands Natural Area Preserve in 1975 and 1979. (Appendix B)

In 1987, the Washington State Legislature created the Natural Resources Conservation Act, and state-owned trust lands on Cypress Island were designated as one of the first Natural Resources Conservation Areas (NRCA). At this time, additional acreage was added to the existing NAP. This at last fulfilled the vision for the conservation of the island and surrounding waters that many people had shared—including the Commissioner of Public Lands, state legislators, island residents, conservationists and recreation visitors. The Department of Natural Resources was selected as the agency to manage these lands to protect ecological systems while providing low-impact use opportunities to the public in the NRCA.

The DNR adopted the “Final Environmental Impact Statement Aquatic Reserves Program Guidance” in 2002. The Cypress Island site was established as an Aquatic Reserve based on the process and criteria described in the Program Guidance.

The current management plan is the result of combined planning efforts to update the Cypress Island Natural Resources Conservation Area Management Plan (June 1996) and to develop a Cypress Island Aquatic Reserve Management Plan.

The Cypress Island NRCA and Aquatic Reserve will be managed for the protection of the island’s outstanding terrestrial and marine

ecological systems, scenic value, cultural resources and habitat for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive species.

The DNR operations at Cypress Island will emphasize restoration and maintenance of the island's forest, grassland, wetland, and adjacent marine communities.

Although included within the boundary outline of the Cypress Island Comprehensive Plan, private lands within the NRCA boundary are not restricted by the guidance in this management plan or by inclusion within the NRCA boundary.